(a) whether Government are aware that there is a popular misconception that agricultural sector as a whole is a heavily subsidised sector;

(b) whether Government are also aware that scholars who have looked at the direct and indirect interventions of Government in the agricultural sector find that the net effect of all these interventions is equivalent to imposition of a modest tax on the agricultural sector rather than handing out large subsidies; and

(c) if so, the steps Government have taken to remove this misconception?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) to (c) Due to subsidies on fertilisers, irrigation water and power for agriculture, there is a usual feeling that agriculture sector is highly subsidised. However, certain studies which have examined the entire interventions by the Government in terms of direct and indirect support have concluded that agriculture sector as a whole has been negatively subsidised. The Government is of the view that compared to many of the developed countries, agriculture sector in India is not heavily subsidised.

Increasing the productivity of Coconut Plantations

4887. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have studied the possibility of increasing productivity of coconut plantations in the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether it is a fact that no new varieties of coconut have been introduced in the Godavari delta of Andhra Pradesh; and

(c) the steps proposed by IARI and other research bodies to study ways of increasing productivity of coconut plantations in coastal areas and Godavari delta in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Research efforts to improve productivity of coconut in coastal areas and Godavari delta in Andhra Pradesh through improved varieties, nutrient management, inter & mixed cropping, management of major diseases like Ganoderma, Tatipaka etc., are being carried out at Ambajipeta Centre under ICAR's All India Coordinated Research Project on Palms, to develop suitable package of practices for adoption by farmers.

Impetus to marketing of Coconuts

4888. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to give impetus to marketing of coconuts in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Coconut Board has taken any steps to popularise coconut products in the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) and (b) For marketing of coconut and its products, following steps are taken:

(i) Central and State agencies are collaborating in the Minimum Support Prices programme for copra, on year to year basis.

(ii) Government of Kerala have decided to distribute coconut oil through PDS to increase the demand for coconut oil;

(iii) During 8th Plan, Coconut Development Board propose to set up 3 Market Intelligence-cum-Sales Centres in metropolis to promote marketing activities of traditional and non-traditional coconut products and to disseminate market intelligence.

(c) and (d) To promote and popularise coconut products, the steps taken by the Coconut Development Board are:

(i) Seven sales counters have been opened in major cities to create awarness among people about various coconut products and to supply quality products;

(ii) Financial assistance is provided for adopting new technologies in coconut product diversification and by-product utilisation, setting up desicated coconut units and facilities for primary processing of coconuts into copra.

(iii) National seminar on processing and marketing with emphasis on product diversification of coconut was held at Bangalore during 1993-94, followed by State level seminars, one each in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu during 1994-95.

Joint Research of Rice Research Institute and IRRI

4889. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Rice Research Institutes have conducted any joint research with IRRI, Manila to introduce any rice strains in suitable areas of Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any schedule has been set up for introduction of new high yielding rice strains in Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if so, the details of the schedule?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir, Indian Council of Agricultural Research is collaborating with IRRI, Manila for exchange of germplasm and elite varieties for being adapted to specific conditions of rice growing in different parts of India. Varieties like IR 64 and IR 36 were tried and popularised in Andhra Pradesh as well through such collaborative efforts. Efforts are being made to popularise hybrid rice using diverse male steril lines received through IRRI sources in Andhra Pradesh.

(c) and (d) The ICAR-IRRI workplan for collaborative research on rice is being reviewed every year and work on crop improvement, crop management and crop protection is progressing as per plan of work.

Encouragement to apiculture in Andhra Pradesh

4890. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have encouraged Apiculture in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether it is a fact that Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh has great potential for honey production;

(c) the steps taken to propagate Apiculture in Andhra Pradesh in 1994-95; and

(d) the new initiatives proposed in 1995-96 in propagating Apiculture in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The Government of India have sanctioned a central sector scheme in October, 1994 for the development of bee keeping for improving crop productivity in 8th plan with a total outlay of Rs. 18.87 crores covering all the States & UTs including Andhra Pradesh. Under the scheme Andhra Pradesh has been provided assistance for production and distribution of bee colonies and strengthening training facilities during 1994-95. Apart from this, the ICAR is providing research support for promotion of bee keeping in the State through AICRP on Honey bee with a centre at Vijayarai, West Godavari District. The